

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A distributed e-commerce catalog comprising:
  - a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component that is locally accessible by a user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component corresponds to a read-only-memory (ROM) and includes a first image of a product; and
  - a software module adapted to interface with a Web browser of the user computer, where the software module is configured to intercept a request from the Web browser to a Web server for a second image of the product that is intended to be included in a Web page of the product such that the request is not sent to the Web server when the first image of the product is available on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component, and where the software module is further configured to retrieve the first image of the product from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component and is configured to provide the first image of the product to the Web browser of the user computer such that the Web browser can display the Web page as intended.
2. The distributed e-commerce catalog as defined in Claim 1, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is stored on a compact-disc read-only-memory (CD-ROM).
3. The distributed e-commerce catalog as defined in Claim 1, where the first image and the second image are identical files.
4. The distributed e-commerce catalog as defined in Claim 1, where the first image and the second image depict the same product, but the first image is a larger file than the second image such that the first image is of higher quality.
5. A distributed e-commerce catalog comprising:
  - a Web browser adapted to communicate with a Web server and to display Web pages to a user including a Web page of a product that is offered for sale, where the Web page specifies inclusion of a file that is available for download from the Web server;
  - a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component that is locally accessible by a user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component corresponds to a read-only-memory (ROM) and includes the file;

a software module adapted to interface with the Web browser, where the software module is configured to intercept a request from the Web browser to the Web server for the file such that the request is not sent to the Web server when the file is available on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component, and where the software module is further configured to retrieve the file from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component and configured to provide the file to the Web browser of the user.

6. The distributed e-commerce catalog as defined in Claim 5, wherein the file corresponds to a multimedia presentation.

7. The distributed e-commerce catalog as defined in Claim 5, wherein the communication between the Web browser and the Web server includes a dial-up connection.

8. A computer program embodied in a tangible medium comprising:

a first module adapted to monitor a request for a content that is intended to be loaded onto a Web page viewable by a user;

a second module adapted to determine whether the requested content is locally available from a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is an optical disk;

a third module adapted to retrieve the content from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component if the content is available on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component; and

a fourth module adapted to retrieve the content from a remote Web server if the content is not available on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component.

9. The computer program as defined in Claim 8, wherein at least a portion of the computer program is implemented as a plug-in to a Web browser.

10. A system that accelerates access to an e-commerce Web site comprising:

a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component that is provided to a user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is pre-loaded with content that is also available from the e-commerce Web site;

an Internet connection that allows the user computer to communicate with the e-commerce Web site;

a means for monitoring a Web browser in the user computer for a request for content, where the request is intended to be sent to the e-commerce Web site;

a means for determining whether the requested content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for intercepting the request to the e-commerce Web site for the content such that the request is not sent to the e-commerce Web site, where the means for intercepting is activated when the requested content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for locally retrieving the content from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component, where the means for locally retrieving is activated when the requested content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for allowing the request for the content to proceed to the e-commerce Web site where the means for allowing is activated when the requested content is not present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for remotely retrieving the content from the e-commerce Web site, where the means for remotely retrieving is activated when the requested content is not present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component; and

a means for providing the retrieved content to the Web browser.

11. The system as defined in Claim 10, wherein the system determines whether the content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component by comparing a uniform resource locator (URL) for the requested content to a URL stored in the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component.

12. The system as defined in Claim 10, wherein the Internet connection comprises a dial-up phone modem.

13. The system as defined in Claim 10, wherein the Internet connection comprises a wireless modem.

14. The system as defined in Claim 10, wherein the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component comprises an optical disk.

15. A system that accelerates access to an e-commerce Web site that is remote from a user computer, the system comprising:

a removable Distributed Electronic Catalog Component in a user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is pre-loaded with content that is also available from the e-commerce Web site;

an Internet connection that allows the user computer to communicate with the e-commerce Web site;

a means for receiving a source code for a Web page from the e-commerce Web site;

a means for evaluating the source code for the Web page for content that is to be retrieved from a remote Web site including from the e-commerce Web site;

a means for retrieving content from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component, wherein the means for retrieving is active when the content is available from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for retrieving the content from the remote Web site, where the means for retrieving is active when the requested content is not present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

a means for displaying the Web page with the retrieved content; and

a means for using the Web page to make a purchase.

16. The system as defined in Claim 15, wherein the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component corresponds to a type of read only memory (ROM).

17. The system as defined in Claim 15, wherein the Internet connection comprises a dial-up Internet connection.

18. A process for accelerating access to an e-commerce Web site comprising:

providing a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component to a user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is pre-loaded with content that is also available from the e-commerce Web site, where the e-commerce Web site is accessible to the user computer through an Internet connection;

monitoring a Web browser in the user computer for a request for content, where the request is intended to be sent to the e-commerce Web site;

delaying the request for content;

determining whether the requested content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

intercepting the request to the e-commerce Web site for the content such that the request is not sent to the e-commerce Web site and retrieving the content from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component if the requested content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

allowing the request for the content to proceed to the e-commerce Web site and retrieving the content from the e-commerce Web site if the requested content is not present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component; and

providing the retrieved content to the Web browser.

19. The process as defined in Claim 18, wherein the process determines whether the content is present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component by comparing a uniform resource locator (URL) for the requested content to a URL stored in the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component.

20. The process as defined in Claim 18, wherein the Internet connection comprises a dial-up phone modem.

21. The process as defined in Claim 18, wherein the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component comprises an optical disk.

22. A process for accelerating access to an e-commerce Web site that is remote from a user computer, the process comprising:

providing a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component to the user computer, where the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is pre-loaded with content that is also available from the e-commerce Web site;

receiving a source code for a Web page from the e-commerce Web site;

evaluating the source code for the Web page for content that is to be retrieved from a remote Web site including from the e-commerce Web site;

retrieving content from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component if the content is available from the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;

retrieving the content from the remote Web site if the requested content is not present on the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component;  
displaying the Web page with the content; and  
using the Web page to make a purchase.

23. The process as defined in Claim 22, wherein the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component corresponds to a type of read only memory (ROM).

24. The process as defined in Claim 22, wherein the user computer communicates with a remote Web site with a dial-up Internet connection.

25. A process of selecting content to be served from an e-commerce Web site to a user computer, the process comprising:

communicating with the user computer;  
receiving an indication of whether a Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is available in the user computer;  
providing a first content to the user computer when the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is available in the user computer; and  
providing a second content to the user computer when the Distributed Electronic Catalog Component is not available in the user computer.

26. The process as defined in Claim 25, wherein the first content and the second content vary in a price of a product.